Spiders of London

Spiders are a large group of invertebrates with approximately 650 British species, nearly half of which are known from Greater London. None are dangerous, whatever the popular press would have you believe. Sometimes people are bitten but British spiders are generally not strong enough to give a proper bite and their venom is weaker than that of most biting insects.

These are some of the most familiar species.

Garden Spider - Araneus diadematus ©Mick Massie

Common Garden Spider - *Araneus diadematus*

This large spider with its large orb-web is probably the most familiar spider to Londoners –even those living right in the centre. It varies in colour from black and white to orange and cream, but nearly always the characteristic cross mark at the top of the abdomen is visible. Prey insects are trapped in the web, anaesthetised with a bite, and then wrapped up in silk.

Wolf Spider - *Pardosa pullata*

Wolf Spider - Pardosa pullata c Mick Massie

This is one of several species of wolf spider; medium-sized running species often seen in numbers running through grass. They don't form packs, but they do hunt by sight, in direct sunlight. Characteristically the females carry the egg-mass around with them; after hatching the young spiderlings are carried on the mother's back for several days.

Zebra spider - *Salticus scenicus*

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Zebra Spider - Salticus scenicus c Mick Massie

This small, usually entirely black and white species has short stubby legs and headlight central eyes characteristic of jumping spiders. It is found on walls, fences and around doors and windows, but is usually only seen in direct sunlight. Like wolf spiders, zebra spiders hunt by sight and are able to jump directly onto prey from several inches away.

Nursery-web spider - *Pisaura mirabilis*

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Nursery Web Spider - Pisaura mirabilis c Mick MassiThis species is common in long grass where it runs about to catch prey and spins an umbrella-shaped retreat where it keeps the egg-mass, when it isn't carrying them underneath its body in the characteristic way shown in the photograph. It has a characteristic white or cream stripe down the head, but otherwise the markings are quite variable.

Crab spider - *Xysticus cristatus*

Crab Spider - Xysticus cristatus c Mick Massie

This straw-coloured spider holds its powerful front legs bent forwards emphasising it's crab-like appearance. Generally seen on the ground in long grass, it does not spin a web but hunts its prey directly. Other species of crab spider have longer, slimmer legs.

Wasp spider - *Argiope bruennichi*

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Wasp Spider - Argiope bruennichi ©Mick Massie

This large spectacular spider spins an orb-web close to the ground to catch grasshoppers which are its main food. It was first known from the Hampshire and Kent coasts in the 1940s; in the past few years it has spread to much of England and Wales as far north as Lincolnshire. Strangely, it produces an egg-mass shaped like a Grecian urn.



Daddy-long-legs Spider - *Pholcus phalangioides*

Daddy-long-legs Spider - Pholcus phalagioides c Mick Massie

Usually found inside houses, the Daddy-long-legs Spider is unmistakeable. When disturbed it shakes itself rapidly and seems to become almost invisible. It’s a very good hunter of mosquitoes, and more surprisingly can overpower the much bigger house spider using it’s long legs to entangle its prey with silk.

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Common House Spider - *Tegenaria domestica*

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House Spider - Tegenaria domestica c Edward Milner

This is the hairy running spider that alarms people when it suddenly appears on the carpet or in the bath. It's quite harmless, and spins the typical cobwebs found in cellars and attics. A larger species, Tegenaria gigantea, is commonly found under logs and under the bark of old trees but rarely enters houses.

Woodlouse spider - *Dysdera crocata*

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Another unmistakeable species with orange abdomen and legs, and a red head (cephalothorax), no markings and very few spines or hairs. It lives where it can find woodlice, under logs, bricks etc., and only occasionally enters houses. It's fangs look dangerous but they are not strong enough to break the skin.

Thickjaw Spider - *Pachygnatha degeeri*



Thickjaw Spider - Pachygnatha degeeri c Jeremy Richardson 'Degeer's thickjaw' is perhaps the best common name for this attractively marked grassland spider. Related to orb-web spinners it seems to have abandoned making a web and hunts in the grass instead. In long grass this is perhaps the commonest London spider, and in some places can reach very large numbers.

Cucumber spider - *Araniella cucurbitina*

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Cucumber Spider - Araniella cucurbitina c Mick Massie

This bright green spider with spiny legs spins a small orb web often in privet hedges. It is related to the garden spider; there are two closely related cucumber spiders which can only be separated under the microscope.

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Edward Milner - LNHS Recorder for Spiders

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